

A report on

Ysgol Bro Helyg

Rising Sun Industrial Estate

Blaina

Blaenau Gwent

NP13 3DQ

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for

Education and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Bro Helyg

Name of provider	Ysgol Bro Helyg
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	300
Pupils of statutory school age	191
Number in nursery classes	62
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year <i>average</i> (<i>The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 22.9%</i>)	19.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (<i>The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 11.1%</i>)	12.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	14.7%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	28/04/2025

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June 2025

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	03/02/2020
Start date of inspection	30/06/2025

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term ‘additional learning needs’ is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school

Summary

Ysgol Bro Helyg is an inclusive and caring community where pupils feel safe and are nurtured to develop into confident and well-rounded individuals. Under the headteacher's clear leadership, there is a strong culture of cooperation among staff which contributes effectively to creating a positive and ambitious learning environment.

Across the school, pupils behave extremely well, show respect for others and take genuine pride in their learning. In a culture of self-reflection and continuous professional support, staff work purposefully to provide interesting experiences for pupils.

The school has a stimulating curriculum and the learning experiences offer an appropriate level of challenge and support. Staff use questioning to extend pupils' understanding and the planning ensures constructive progression in their skills. However, although there is regular feedback to pupils, it does not always help them understand the next steps in their learning. As a result of robust teaching, pupils work confidently individually and in groups and their ideas form the basis of teachers' planning. Teachers are beginning to plan opportunities to develop pupils into independent learners, although this has not yet been rooted fully. The school uses the outdoor area extremely skilfully to provide an exciting curriculum that stimulates curiosity and fosters positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils make good progress in Welsh and use the language confidently both orally and in writing. In addition, rich projects and learning opportunities offer beneficial opportunities for pupils to apply their digital and numeracy skills successfully. As a result, most pupils make sound progress during their time at the school.

The provision in 'Y Noddfa', namely the local authority's specialist communication and autism provision, is extremely effective. Provision is led robustly and pupils make strong personal progress against their individual targets.

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve

- R1. Ensure that the feedback to pupils supports them to identify the next steps in their learning.
- R2. Strengthen the opportunities for pupils to develop into independent learners.

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main evaluation

Ysgol Bro Helyg is a caring and welcoming school. Under the headteacher's innovative leadership, leaders and staff work together to create an inclusive community with high aspirations for pupils' learning and wellbeing. Staff know their pupils well and have positive working relationships with them. As a result, most pupils, including those who attend 'Y Noddfa', the local authority's specialist communication and autism provision, feel happy and safe at the school.

All staff promote positive behaviour amongst pupils which leads them to show appropriate respect and courtesy towards their peers, staff and visitors. Almost all pupils behave well and show strong motivation, interest and pride in their learning. This contributes to most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households, making good progress from their individual starting point over time. Staff support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness successfully.

A notable strength of the school is the progress in pupils' literacy skills over time. From an early age, many pupils develop confidence in listening and speaking in Welsh. By the top of the school, most pupils discuss confidently and use a wide range of vocabulary when speaking and in their writing. As pupils move through the school, most make sound progress in their reading skills. They read with fluency and use purposeful strategies to understand the meaning of words, sentences and paragraphs within a text. Through this, pupils use a range of their literacy skills successfully in a variety of contexts across all areas of the curriculum.

Most pupils develop robust number skills across the school. As a result of interesting learning experiences and activities that are planned by teachers, pupils apply their numeracy skills successfully in other areas of the curriculum by creating graphs, analysing data and solving problems. In the best practice, the level of challenge of numeracy activities challenges pupils to apply their numeracy skills at a higher level effectively.

Staff work together successfully to develop a broad and stimulating curriculum for pupils which celebrates the area's unique heritage. They convey a vision to develop pupils into principled citizens who are proud of their history, culture and the Welsh language. The curriculum builds on pupils' previous knowledge, skills and understanding purposefully. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' digital, language and numeracy skills as well as beneficial opportunities for them to apply their skills in authentic learning activities and contexts.

Recently, a successful focus has been placed on developing pupils' understanding of specific aspects of science and technology. By cooperating with various partners and a

programme of beneficial professional development, the provision offers valuable opportunities for pupils to apply a range of numerical and digital skills in interesting and exciting projects. For example, there are beneficial opportunities for pupils to design and create products by using the school's 3D printer. As a result, most pupils' digital skills develop extremely effectively over time.

Leaders know the school well. They are proactive and thorough in their evaluation methods and there are appropriate opportunities for all members of the school community, including pupils, to contribute. Governors support the school effectively. They take pride in their role and visit the school in order to use first-hand knowledge to promote improvement in provision and experiences for pupils. For example, they work with leaders to ensure that grants are used to maintain the highly innovative external learning provision that exists in the school.

Spotlight 1 - Provide a stimulating curriculum that makes effective use of the outdoor area

Staff have developed the outdoor area in a very creative and successful way to enrich the provision and promote pupils' positive attitudes to their learning. Through specific professional development opportunities and regular cooperation among staff, they have created an extremely effective sequence of learning activities for pupils to apply their literacy, creative and numeracy skills. For example, pupils learn carpentry skills to make cars out of wood, plant fruit and vegetables to eat, and create food for the birds out of natural materials found in the school environment. This fosters pupils' curiosity and creativity and encourages them to persevere with their outdoor tasks.

An effective culture of reflection and continuous improvement has been established in the school. Staff lead on curriculum areas, reflecting and seeking opportunities for improvement regularly. Professional learning supports the school's current improvement priorities purposefully. Thorough evaluation structures enable leaders to monitor the effect of this on pupils' learning experiences, progress and attitudes to learning. Leaders support staff at different levels to pursue beneficial professional training pathways.

All staff have high expectations for pupils' learning. The teaching offers appropriate challenge and a suitable pace to facilitate the learning, and in most learning sessions, teachers provide the right balance between challenge and support. Staff use questioning effectively to extend pupils' understanding and address misconceptions in pupils' learning in a timely manner. There is consistency across the school in feedback to pupils. However, feedback does not always help the pupils to identify next steps in their learning.

Across the school, there is firm consistency in teaching methods and teachers work together effectively to ensure that learning is progressive within and across years. They plan exciting activities for pupils to apply their skills and work independently. However,

the opportunities for pupils to plan their learning and to develop as independent learners have not been developed fully to date.

The school has a number of pupil committees which offer valuable opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills and opportunities to express views on issues that are important to them. By working on various projects, such as designing the school library, pupils contribute directly to the school's ethos and strategic direction.

Across the school, there is a strong sense of teamwork. A notable example of this is the way in which staff work together to identify and support the needs of individual pupils. They know the pupils extremely well and provide timely and appropriate support which has a positive effect on pupils' learning and wellbeing. Arrangements for identifying and responding to additional learning needs are thorough. Staff provide comprehensive support to help pupils with ALN, including promoting wellbeing and managing emotions. Leaders include the views of external agencies effectively to plan the support and evaluate its effect, and they track the progress of pupils with ALN skilfully.

Provision in the 'Y Noddfa' class is led well. Leaders have a sound understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Appropriate attention is given to improvement and leaders plan rich and relevant professional development opportunities for staff. Pupils who attend the specialist class engage well with their peers and staff. They are polite and work extremely effectively in small groups and individually, where appropriate. Almost all pupils make sound progress towards the targets in their individual development plan. Over time and with support, they gain confidence and most pupils' communication skills develop well.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are not a cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for the management of the site are not a cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's funding appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer questionnaires and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers, staff and the governing body/members of the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report refers to different quantities and proportions, e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website
(<http://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).